

Adventurous Prayer
Session 7
HOW HE ANSWERS

“When I pray, you answer me; You encourage me by giving me the strength I need!” **Psalm 138:3**

What is the strangest answering machine message you’ve ever heard?

We pray. We tell God all our concerns. We make requests on behalf of our loved one. We send our heart’s cry right into his throne room. And then, we must wait. No confirmation that a message has been received. No receipts. No quick answers.

When we have questions, we really like to get answers. It’s a system we’re accustomed to. Even when we cannot get in touch with someone immediately, we have options. We leave our name and number on answering machines. We leave messages on others’ voice mail services. We can even get confirmation that our email messages have been received. We know they’ll get back to us at their earliest convenience.

But God doesn’t make any such promise to us. Sometimes the answer comes before we can even finish praying. Sometimes a door closes with such a resounding thud that we know the answer must be no. But more often than not, God makes us wait.

Marilyn Meberg says: One of my physical responses to the poison still working its way out of my system has been hair loss. I was rather embarrassed to bring it up to God, but when I prayed my hair prayer, there was the immediate inner assurance that hair would indeed come for the purpose of Marilyn “knowing” that God is God. The hair came. I cannot even begin to understand or explain the divine “why” of my hair experience. The hair is merely something visible that God is using tangibly to assure me of his divine power. His sovereign design to raise me up again in spite of how I felt or even look, and the outlandish lengths to which he’ll go to reassure me of his love and power. .

- 1 One of the comforts of prayer is, we know, no matter what the answer might be that in his own time, God will answer. David knew this. What did he say in **Psalm 17:6**?

- 2 There are time when God answers our prayers with amazing speed. David had an example of this in his life. Read **Daniel 9: 21-23**. Why does Gabriel say he has come?

- 3 The prayers God answers are often everyday prayers, still miraculous in their own way. What prayer does God answer in **Psalms 34:4**?

- 4 What kinds of prayers can God answer? Jesus answers this for us in **Mark 11:24**.

- 5 There is another example of answered prayer given by Paul in **Philippians 1:19**. What does he declare?

Usually, when we pray, we know exactly what we want God to do. We've given our situation much thought. We've checked out the pro and cons, considered our options, and we've decided how God should work. As we kneel in prayer, we unfold carefully laid plans hoping for his stamp of approval. Once we get the nod from on high, we can move forward smoothly with life.

Unfortunately, God doesn't operate that way. I think he delights in surprising us. Just look at all the surprises he slipped into the Bible! Sarah had a baby when she was ninety-two years old. Jacob was reunited with the son he thought had been killed by wild animals. The eighth boy in a family of shepherds from Bethlehem is sought out by God's prophet and anointed as the next king of Israel. The widow who shared the last bit of food in her house

with Elijah found herself in possession of a pitcher that never ran out of oil. A poor orphaned Jewish girl becomes the Queen of Persia and saves her people from a murderous plot. The man thrown into a den of hungry lions comes out alive the next day and receives a promotion instead. Improbable? Unbelievable? Incredible? Inconceivable? And yet, true.

Things don't always work out the way we think they should. But sometimes that's because God has something better in mind.

- 6 When I was little, I knew when my mom said “No” it meant no. “Maybe” usually meant yes. “I’ll think about it” most often meant no. And “We’ll see” generally meant yes. There are times when God will tell us No.” He doesn’t always give us what we want. Have you ever experienced a “No” from God that you were grateful to have received in hindsight?

- 7 Of all the answers my parents ever gave to my questions, the hardest to live with was “Wait and see.” It was enough to make an impatient child squirm with frustration. Does God make us wait” Yep. How does David encourage us to handle ourselves while we wait in **Psalm 27:14**?

- 8 **Psalm 130:5** says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits. And in his word I do hope”. So while we await the answers we seek through prayer, we can gather hope from God’s Word. What promise does God give to those who are waiting in **Isaiah 40:31**?

Marilyn Meberg says: My husband died at age fifty-two of cancer. Our baby died when she was two weeks old. Scores of people prayed, but God did not choose to do what I longed for. Why not? God simply does what he does because he’s God. I’ll never figure him out.

9 Micah felt sure God would answer him. “Therefore I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me”. But what do we do in the meantime? What should be our manner—our behavior—as we await God’s answer to our prayers? Look at David’s urging on **Psalm 62:5**.

10 Even when we know the answers we seek will come eventually, waiting can be hard. So here is one last verse of encouragement from the prophet Jeremiah. Look up **Lamentations 3:25-26**. What is God’s promise to those who seek him?

TRINKET TO TREASURE: At the close of each session, a gift will be placed in your hand to serve as a reminder of the things we have learned through scripture and our time together. It will be a small token to keep us from forgetting the faith journey we are traveling

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have provided us with good advice this evening. We know that with you, nothing is impossible. But we are told to be patient and to wait. That is often hard to do. Sometimes your answered pray is a “no” and confusing to us. But your awaited answer may lead us to new blessings. Help us to understand that so that we won’t be restless or unsettled. Help us to be silent and to wait patiently, always trusting in your plan for us. Amen